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CHAPTER V.

YASSIN—CHITRAL.

FOUR miles above Gahkuch, the frontier fort of Ponyal, the valley contracts to a narrow defile, and travelling becomes exceedingly difficult for a distance of 9 miles. In the course of this defile there are two points, about 4 miles apart, at which the passage can literally be barred by a single man, the precipitous rocks on either side making it impossible for the most expert cragsman to find a way, except along the narrow path beside the river. These two points are situated on the respective frontiers of Ponyal and Yassin, and a small guard is maintained on either side of them; the 4 miles of debateable ground between them being claimed by neither state. Passing into Yassin territory, the valley slightly opens out, the hills on both sides rising to a great height in fantastic pinnacles and castle-like crags with perpendicular scarps. Sixteen miles from the Ponyal frontier the mouth of the Woorshigoom Valley is reached, and 10 miles beyond the junction is the village of Yassin, or Yessen, at an elevation of 7,800 feet. The valley here opens out to more than a mile in width, and the mountains on both sides lose their precipitous appearance. Ten miles further on the valley again contracts, and at about 25 miles from Yassin the foot of the Durkot Pass is reached, whence Surhad on the right bank of the Oxus is at a distance of only two days' journey. For about four months in the year horses are unable to traverse this pass, but men on foot can find a passage at all times, except for about two months in the depth of winter. The height of the summit of the pass is probably about 14,000 feet. The village of Durkot at its foot is memorable for the treacherous murder, in 1870, of Mr. Hayward, the first Englishman who visited Yassin.

The people of Woorshigoom, as already mentioned, belong to the Boorish stock, and speak the same language as that spoken in Hunza and Nager, with only slight variations of dialect. This applies only to the main body of the tillers of

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the soil, and not to the ruler or the ruling class, who threaten in time to efface the original inhabitants. By them the local name of Boorishé has been converted into Woorshik, from which also the valley takes its name. I am unable to say to what language the term *goom* belongs, but it evidently means either "valley" or "country," as there are several instances of its application to signify the place inhabited by certain people, as Kalashgoom, the country of the Kalash. In Hunza, Nager, and Gilgit, Yassin is sometimes called Azair, which may be the ancient name of the valley, but is more likely a corruption of the name Ghizr, a district of some importance further to the westward. The people of both Yassin and Chitral are also sometimes styled by their eastern neighbours Poré, and their country Poriaki, from *boor*, "the west." The fixed population of Woorshigoom is, owing to oppression and misgovernment, very small, probably not exceeding 3,000 souls. The soil is particularly rich and fertile, though the climate will not permit of its yielding more than one crop in the year. The ruling family are styled Khushwakté, from an ancestor named Khushwakt, and the title assumed is the Persian one of "Mihter." Reminiscences of the more ancient rulers exist in the names of certain spots, such as *Thum rai*, "the Thum's seat." The present Mihter, Gholam Mohi-oodeen, is better known by his nickname of Peihlowan Bahadoor. He is a young man of twenty-nine years of age, and of manly and energetic character, inherited from his father, Gohr Aman, whose cruelties in Gilgit have been related by Mr. Drew, but who with all his cruelty of disposition was undoubtedly an able and energetic soldier. Peihlowan Bahadoor succeeded his brother Meer Wulli, when the latter was forced to fly from the country after the murder of Mr. Hayward. The princes of the Khushwakté family rule over a considerable part of Upper Chitral as well as Yassin, but generally prefer the latter as their place of residence.

From Yassin two roads lead to the Chitral Valley. By the Toowi Pass, Mastooch can be reached in five days: this route, however, can only be used in summer, when it is the one most frequented, as by it the numerous river-crossings, which constitute the chief difficulty to be encountered, are avoided. The pass is a high one, probably not less than 16,000 feet, and a difficult piece of glacier has to be traversed. The second and easier, though longer, route is by Ghizr and Laspoor.

This road runs from the mouth of the Woorshigoom Valley

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133 are two pieces of water on it, the largest of which is 2½ miles long and three quarters of a mile broad. There is no [487] surface drainage from either lake. Across the Shandur plateau lies the principal thoroughfare between the Kashkar Valley and the valleys to the eastward, and it is open to traffic of all kinds throughout the year. The peaks overlooking it on the north and south rise to a height of some 2,000 feet above the level of the plateau. On the western side the descent is somewhat abrupt into the narrow but fertile Laspoor Valley. The stream forming this valley takes its rise in the mountains at the head of the Panjkora Valley, and 15 miles from the foot of the Shandur plateau joins the Kashkar Valley at Mastooch at an elevation of 7,500 feet. The valley above [103] Mastooch to the foot of the Baroghil Pass is called Yarkhoon, or, "the friend's murder," from the fatal termination of a quarrel between two fellow-travellers which once occurred in it. Below Mastooch it is called Kho, the whole being known as part of Kashkar Bala, and forming an important part of the possessions of the Khushwakté family, who, however, prefer Yassin as a residence. Mastooch is capable of supporting a considerable population, and the valley for many miles averages from three quarters of a mile to a mile in breadth. Looking down the valley from Mastooch, the magnificent mountain of Tirich Mir[1] fills the whole view. Looking up the valley from Chitral, it occupies the whole landscape in the same way, and it is said to be equally conspicuous from Zebak in the Oxus Valley. It is visible also from many points in Kaffiristan, where it is called Meysurmoon. Many wonderful tales are related about this mountain, one of which is, that in a deep glen high up on its snow-clad sides is a large tank of great beauty lined with blocks of white marble.

From the foot of Tirich Mir the Tirich Valley runs northwards for over 60 miles, gradually curving round to the eastward till it joins the Toorikho Valley, and the two streams combined, after a further course of nearly 40 miles in a southerly direction through the Moolkho Valley, join the Kho Valley 25 miles below Mastooch. These valleys form the region known as Kashkar Bala, the whole of which,

133 103 [1] Sir H. Rawlinson (in his Monograph on the Oxus, *Royal Geo. Soc. Journal*), in discussing the etymology of the word Pamir, has suggested the connection of the second syllable with our English word "mere," but in Tirich Mir and Dyemir (Nanga Parbat), not to mention Mount Meru of the Brahmins, there is nothing to connect the word "Mir" specially with the idea of a lake country.

In Baber's Memoirs (page 313) it is especially mentioned that *Mir* means a hill, but it is not specified in what language. The pronunciation appears to be properly "Mer," and not "Mir."

1: Drew G-3 (1862-1872) 1875 AV1 Kashmir
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132 raised. In winter snow seldom falls, but on occasional years it may do so to the depth of an inch, melting away with the first
139 sun. The mountains round are lofty, rocky, and bare; these increase the summer's heat. There is a fall of about 250 feet to the river Indus, which has here a width of 160 yards; the water flows smoothly, and has, I think, a considerable depth; the ferry is a mile or so above the fort. Immediately opposite comes in the Se stream, while the Gilgit River falls in a few miles above.

GILGIT.

103 From the mouths of the Dárd people, when talking among themselves, in their own language, the sound of this name seemed to my ear such as would properly be represented by the spelling *Gilyit*.* But all people of other races who have had occasion to use the name—Kashmírís, Sikhs, Dográs, and Europeans—have caught the sound as *Gilgit*, and used this form until it has become so much known that it would be inconvenient, not to say useless, for me to attempt to change the name.

131 The district of Gilgit consists of the lower part of the valley
148 of a river tributary to the Indus, which, rising in the mountains that bound Badakhshán and Chitrál, flows south-eastward until it falls into the great river, a little above Bawanji. The length of the course of this Gilgit River, speaking roughly and only following the greater changes of direction, is 120 miles, which are thus divided,—Yásin includes a length of 60 miles, Punial of 25 miles, and Gilgit of 35 miles. Yásin is beyond the Maharaja of Kashmir's boundary; Punial is within it, being governed by a Raja dependent on and aided by the Maharaja's power; Gilgit is administered directly by the Maharaja's officers. This refers only to one line of valley—the main one; besides this there are important branch valleys belonging to Yásin, and there is a long tributary valley on the north-east, which is occupied by two other small states—Hunza and Nagar.

* Vigne says that the real name of Gilgit is said to be "Gilid." Dr. Leitner speaks of "Ghilghit or Gilit."

4: Durand G-3 (1888-92) 1900 AVI Kashmir
Dard AV 3
Astor

country, and close under whose shadow we were marching,—magnificent views, giving an overpowering impression of towering height. Locally it is called Deomir, "the mountain of the gods," a fitting name.

The last few marches showed miles of terraced land out of cultivation, the result of the incursions of the murderous Chilasis who raided from the Indus valley. In a country where every foot of cultivation has to be won with heavy toil from nature, nothing appeals so to your heart as the sight of deserted land and ruined homesteads.

Finally, after thirteen days' marching, we reached Astor, which used to be the capital of a kingdom important enough in a small way in the Hindu-Kush. The Sikhs absorbed it, all that remains of its former glories being a fort now held by the Dogras.

Astor boasts of a bazaar, the first met with since leaving Kashmir; beyond it there are only two, at Gilgit and Chitral. Most of the trade was at this time done by itinerant traders from Koli and Palas in the Indus valley, who brought goods from India, taking back gold-dust and products of Central Asia, and who penetrated into the remotest glens. The more peaceful state of things which we introduced has given a start to Gilgit, which is now becoming the emporium of this portion of the Hindu-Kush.

I here made the acquaintance of Bahadur Khan, Raja of Astor, the representative of the old ruling race, an old gentleman whose honesty, intimate knowledge of the country, and connection with all the local rajas were to be of the greatest value to me on more than one occasion. Deprived of his kingdom and very poor, living on a small grant of land

4z Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV3

CHAPTER VII

DARDISTAN

101 The limits of the Gilgit Agency correspond roughly with the region to which has been given the name of Dardistan. The name Dardistan, or country of the Dards, is misleading, for there is no race to which the title of Dard can fairly be given, no country so called by its inhabitants. However, such as it is, the name is a convenient one, and has been adopted, if not invented, by the scientific. Dardistan comprises the whole of Chitral, Yasin, Punyal, the Gilgit valley, Hunza and Nagar, the Astor valley, the Indus valley from Bunji to Batera, the Kohistan-i-Malazai, that is the upper reaches of the Panjkora river, and the Kohistan of Swat. Kohistan means the country of the hills, and corresponds to our word Highlands. The section of the Indus valley included in the above is again divided into two main portions, the upper containing the Shin republics of Gor, Chilas, Darel, Tangir, called Shinaka or Shinkari, and the lower generally known as Kohistan. It is in this lower portion alone, from the Kandia river to Batera, that the inhabitants of the right bank of the Indus are said to use the

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